

Relationship between Teachers' Conduct and Teachers' Performance in Public Primary Schools in Igembe North Sub-County, Meru County

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Abstract

The Teachers Service Commission has put in place mechanisms to evaluate the performance of primary school teachers via the teaching competence standards outlined in the Performance Appraisal and Development manual. In spite of this effort, low performance of primary school teachers has continued to raise concerns from different stakeholders. This study aimed to assess the relationship between the teachers' conduct and the teacher's performance in public primary schools in Igembe North Sub-County, Meru County. The correlational research design was adopted. A sample size of 202 teachers, 14 head teachers, and one Sub-County Education Officer participated in the study. A proportionate simple random sampling technique was used in selecting teachers and head teachers, while the Sub-county Education Officer was purposively selected. Data was collected using questionnaires and an interview guide whose content validity and reliability were verified. Factor analysis, mean and standard deviation, correlation and regression analysis were used in analyzing the quantitative data. Thematic analysis was applied to analyze the qualitative data. Information was presented in tables, and excerpts. The poor state of teachers' performance in public primary schools, which was attributed to personal, school-based, and employer-related factors, was noted. The study found out a statistically significant predictive relationship between the teacher's conduct and the teacher's performance. It recommended that TSC empowers head teachers with skills to nurture, counsel, and mentor teachers' conduct. It should also embark on an affordable continuous teacher's development program to amplify professional conduct. Results have implicated leadership, mentorship programs for teachers, and human resources management practices in public primary schools, and contributes new knowledge in staff performance and appraisal management.

Keywords: *Teacher's conduct, TPAD, teacher's performance, teaching competence standards, teacher's performance management, Public primary schools, Meru County.*

IJPP 10(2); 31-45

1.0 Introduction

Education achievement is determined by teachers' performance among many other factors. Teachers' performance refers to the outcomes of teachers' input when imparting knowledge to learners (Munje, 2018). It is characterized by performance appraisal scores, learners' examination results, and other qualitative parameters that differ from one country to another (Nzaro, 2020). Teachers' performance is of great significance to teachers and other stakeholders in the education sector (Bichi, 2017). It affects the education achievement of learners and has been used to predict trends in the education sector. Further, teachers' performance has also been used as a critical determinant for the final output of educational pursuit, which has far-reaching effects on industrialization, health, and agriculture, among other sectors (Soland, Hamilton & Stecher, 2013).

Moreover, teachers' performance is significant to professional development (Almeida, 2017). This is because promotions and advancements in the teaching profession consider the teacher performance. A performing teacher is also satisfied. Research has indicated that satisfaction triggers a high level of productivity and eventually paves ways to creativity and innovation among teachers (Yoon, 2017; Xu & Qi, 2019).

Most countries have an established evaluation system that lays down the criteria for evaluating teachers' performance. The evaluation criteria and system may take the form of a performance evaluating rubric, which in most cases highlights the teaching

competence standards, which subsequently act as indicators and evidence of performance (Ayeni, 2018). The evaluation systems for teachers in countries like Poland, Australia, Chile, Finland, Austria and Denmark are profoundly elaborate. In these countries, teachers are required to familiarize themselves with performance evaluation criteria at the engagement stage (Zhang, et al., 2016); Laska, 2016).

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The primary school level of education plays a critical role in building the educational foundation of a learner. Basic details of education are taught at this level. Some scholars such as Ewijk (2016) argue that the intellectual and character towards education are moulded at the primary school level; hence, the need to focus on a teacher's performance. In Kenya, primary school teachers are assessed and appraised by the Teachers' Service Commission (TSC). The Teachers' Service Commission of Kenya is the formal body responsible for employing primary and secondary schools teachers. One of the critical responsibilities of TSC is to appraise teachers. TSC has given clear

guidelines and criteria for evaluating teachers through the Teaching Performance Appraisal and Development operation manual (TPAD).

The TPAD highlights the specific teaching competence standards that are critical in determining the teachers' performance. Examples of justifications of each teaching competence standard for quantifying teachers' performance are well stipulated in the manual. Structured performance scores are designated against each of the teaching competence standards. The manual has specifically highlighted three teaching competence standards; namely, instructional delivery, teacher conduct, and community of practice (TSC, 2019). Each competence standard bears a weighted average performance score.

Public primary schools from Igembe North Sub-County have continued to record underperformance in the national examinations in the sub-county over the years. This has been heavily linked to non-performance by primary school teachers (Jonjo, 2017). This necessitated assessment of the relationship between the teachers' conduct and the teacher's performance in public primary schools in Igembe North Sub-County. The dearth of literature in the aspects mentioned above further justifies the existence of this research gap.

Statement of the problem

The Teachers Service Commission has put in place mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the performance of primary school teachers as outlined in the Performance Appraisal and Development (TPAD) (TSC, 2019). Despite

the effort made by the government, the performance of primary school teachers, characterized by absenteeism, poor lesson attendance, and failure to cover syllabus, hostility, poor class management practices, unconducive working environment, performance examination results, and poor interpersonal relationship, among others, has continued to raise concerns (Oduol, 2012; Nzaro 2020).

Scholars such as Almeida (2017), Kagema and Irungu (2018) have focused mainly on performance appraisal parameters, head teachers' perspectives on teacher appraisal systems, school performance, and academic performance. There is scanty literature on teacher's conduct as a teaching competence standards and its effect on the teacher performance in Kenya.

Purpose of the Study

This study aimed to assess the relationship between the teachers' conduct and the teacher's performance in public primary schools in Igembe North Sub-County, Meru County, Kenya.

Research Hypothesis

The null hypothesis (H01) predicted that teachers' conduct does not significantly correlate with the teacher's performance in public primary schools in Igembe North Sub-County Meru County, Kenya.

Overview of Literature Teacher's Conduct

A deeper understanding of the teachers' conduct in the teaching profession was informed by the theory of moral positivism which was propounded by Shawn in 2013.

This theory helps to clarify what it takes to achieve good teacher's conduct by outlining the prerequisites (the teacher ethics and professional code of conduct document) in implanting a culture and behaviour of adherence to good professional demeanor among primary school teachers (Greenberg, 2014).

Teacher's conduct is about the teacher's behaviour, deportment, and mannerism (Zhang et al., 2016; Laska, 2016). It also incorporates observing set standards and regulations (TSC, 2019; Boset et al., 2017). Notably, the teaching profession has a set of standards and regulations to guide and shape the conduct of individual teachers. A common aspect of regulation and instruction is ethics, which is exceptionally paramount in the teaching profession. A code of ethics is defined as a set of rules that govern the mannerism and behaviour of persons in a certain profession (Boset et al., 2017). Therefore, the teacher's conduct in most countries is defined by teachers' code of ethics.

The teacher's conduct is largely regarded as a backbone and a locomotive upon which other teaching competencies thrive, and usually extends outside the classroom and the school environment. It supplements different teaching competence standards. Notably, the teaching competence standards such as instructional delivery and the community of practice are heavily inclined to the teacher's conduct, especially in shaping one's mannerisms, guiding actions, and regulating the nature of involvement in various aspects. Monitoring and keeping the teacher's conduct under check is an essential practice that an

employer usually performs and implements. The practice helps keep teachers on their toes by regulating their behaviour to protect the interests of other stakeholders in the education sector (Zhang et al., 2016).

The significance of the teacher's conduct has attracted significant scholarly attention in many countries worldwide. Zhang et al. (2016) reported the importance of teachers' professionalism, saying that it complemented other teaching competence standards such as instructional delivery. A similar study that explored teachers' conduct was conducted by Munje (2018). Both studies underscored the fundamental roles played by professionalism and punctuality in guiding the teaching career. Milamowski et al. (2012) focused on classroom performance in lower grade schools in the United States of America and underpinned courtesy, while Nwogu and Unuigbo (2018) emphasized on dressing code, mannerisms in the communication as essential aspects of teachers' conduct.

Osamwonyi (2016) also noted how teachers' conduct was affecting the academic performance of learners in Nigeria, which were attributed to teacher's ability to keep records among other factors. Other critical aspects of teacher's conduct mentioned by Laska (2016) in Prishtina the professional conduct which influenced the experience of learners. Poor professional conduct of teachers was also noted by Odanga (2015) among teachers in Nairobi County. According to Odanga, teachers inculcate in learners the attitudes, values, and character. The study by Kagema and Irungu (2018) in Murang'a and Kirinyaga Counties faulted the

use of TPAD in measuring teacher's conduct. They observed that important decisions such as demotions, allocation of higher responsibility, promotions, and training could not be just be made from the appraisal report in its current status, saying that the TPAD tool has negated aspects of teachers' motivation.

The preceding discussion has pointed out teachers' issues and how teachers' conduct is linked to one's performance. Several studies have also linked teachers' behaviour, which is ultimately used to measure the teacher's performance, to students' performance. The literature has noticed the glaring research gaps considering that no study has assessed the extent to which teacher's conduct as perceived in the TPAD affected the teacher's performance in Kenya.

2.0 Materials and Methods

This study employed a mixed-methods approach and adopted a correlational research design. The target population was 979 teachers and 67 head teachers of public primary schools and one Sub-County TSC Director in Igembe North Sub-county, Meru County, Kenya. An overall sample size of 217 was considered sufficient for this study. A proportionate simple random sampling technique was used in sampling teachers and head teachers, while the purposive sampling method was applied to the Sub-County TSC Director. Data was collected using questionnaires which was administered to teachers and an interview guide on head teachers whose quality was ensured by checking construct, criterion and content

validity. Reliability of the instrument was verified using the Cronbach alpha coefficient.

Thematic analysis was applied in analyzing qualitative data. Factor analysis, mean and standard deviation were computed accordingly, while correlation and regression analysis were used to test the research hypotheses. Information was presented using tables, figures and narratives.

3.0 Results and Discussion

The results of this research have been presented and discussed as guided by the main constructs of the study.

Reliability Results

The results showed a reliability coefficient of 0.745 on teachers' conduct (X₂) and 0.849 on teachers' performance (Y). A reliability coefficient above 0.7 is regarded as reliable in social sciences (Bhattacharjee, 2012).

Response Rate

Out of a sample size of 202 teachers and 14 head teachers, the study recorded (191(95%) and 12(86%) response rates, respectively.

Findings on Teachers' Performance

Overall, most teachers reported having scored 60 points during the last annual performance evaluation. This performance score was attributed to personal factors, school-based factors, government/employer-related factors and parental factors. In addition, several sentiments on teachers' performance in public primary schools were presented to respondents in a 5-level Likert scale to solicit their views on the same.

The performance score was further measured using the continuous scale on the fourteen sentiments, finally transformed to a latent variable using the mean values. The aspects measured by the feelings mainly focused on performance evaluation, classroom observations, flexible working schedule,

training opportunities, training and development committee, appraisal results, feedback, and recognition. The descriptive results on the outcome variable were ranked according to the descending values of the mean on each sentiment as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics on teachers’ performance in public primary schools

Statements on teachers’ performance (N = 191)	Mean	Std. D
a) Recognition of the small achievements by the head-teacher motivates me to improve my teaching services and eventually raises my performance	4.19	1.089
b) Nature and application of instructional delivery plays a role in improving my performance score	3.86	1.074
c) The head-teacher is concerned with teachers’ commitments that impedes their performance inside and outside the school	3.84	1.113
d) Involvement in a community of practice activities plays a role in improving my performance score	3.76	1.149
e) A flexible working schedule and timetable plays a role in improving my performance score	3.70	1.011
f) Regular evaluation of teachers reciprocates improvement of their performance	3.53	1.349
g) The nature of teachers' conduct plays a role in improving my performance score	3.48	1.174
h) Work-life balance reciprocates my performance in the teaching job	3.47	1.251
i) The feedback I receive from my appraiser helps me take the required actions to improve my performance	3.44	1.177
j) Teacherperformance09	3.24	1.236
k) Ability to have work-life balance plays a role in improving my performance score	3.17	1.304
l) Classroom observations by supervisors enable me to improve my performance	3.15	1.303
m) The head-teacher uses the appraisal results to motivate teachers to perform better	2.84	1.340
n) Our school has a staff training and development committee which help the teacher to deliver superb performance	2.45	1.280

The results in Table 1 show nine aspects that had a high level of agreement in the responses (the mean value was above the expected median; mean>3.4). The sentiments were about recognition motivation, instructional delivery and the head-teacher factor. Others were on involvement, workplace flexibility, regular evaluation, the nature of teachers' conduct, and work-life balance. These aspects can broadly be classified into two; that is, leadership based factors (the recognition programs put in place, concerns on teachers' commitments from the head teacher, having flexible working schedules, regular evaluation of teachers' performance, providing feedback on teacher's performance); and individual-based factors (nature of instructional delivery applied by a teacher, participating in community of practice activities, and ability to have a work-life balance).

The results confirm the claim by Staihes (1980) in the Spillover theory, which recognizes the role of leadership in achieving a teacher's performance by facilitating positive spillover. The theory notes that satisfaction in the work domain may pose dissatisfaction in the family and personal domain. As a result, the head teacher ought to foster a conducive environment in the school to fathom positive spillover, which ensures an excellent work-life balance.

The results in Table 1 show that most teachers disagreed that 'our school has a staff

training and development committee which help the teacher to deliver superb performance'. Failure to have an established staff training and development committee in public primary schools can be attributed to absence of guiding structures and lack of funds to facilitate the requisite activities.

Through an open-ended question, and interview sessions of head teachers and the TSC Sub-county Director, various measures were suggested that could be considered to improve the performance of teachers in public primary schools. The most prominent ones included ensuring fair promotion of teachers, employing additional teachers to reduce the teaching workload, providing adequate teaching and learning resources, ensuring conducive learning and teaching environment, moderating the delocalization action to minimize destabilizing families, instituting continuous teachers' professional development, and involving teachers in decision making process; especially on matters regarding their performance. Additionally, the TSC Sub-county Director noted the need for teachers to attend the induction trainings, and the head teachers to ensure teachers are well monitored.

Findings on Teachers' Conduct

The study further investigated the indicators of teachers' conduct. The findings are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Descriptive results on Indicators of teacher’s conduct

Indicators of teacher's behaviour (N = 191)	Mean	Std. D.
a Adherence to work ethics	4.25	.944
b Good communication skills	4.24	.992
c Punctuality and meeting deadlines	4.02	1.064
d Code of conduct policy	4.01	1.112
e Professionalism in applying teaching pedagogies and strategies	3.99	1.064
f Decency and modesty in the dress code	3.85	1.125
g Rules, policies, standards and guidelines	3.76	1.175
h The teaching competencies outlined in the TPAD	2.51	1.447

According to the findings in Table 2, six indicators of teacher's conduct featured prominently. They include: adherence to work ethics, good communication skills, punctuality and meeting deadlines, code of conduct policy, professionalism in applying teaching pedagogies and strategies, decency and modesty in the dress code, rules, policies, standards and guidelines. Each of the six conduct indicators mentioned above had a mean above 3.4 (the expected median) and a mode of 5. This means that the said indicators play a role in characterizing teachers' conduct and are therefore appropriate in determining the teacher's performance. Munje (2018) argued that teachers are specifically expected

to be punctual in meeting deadlines such as syllabus coverage, surrendering reports, attending meetings, reporting to duty, and conducting lessons according to the school/class timetable. This reveals the importance and magnitude of punctuality on teacher's performance. Munje (2018) emphasized the need for the assessors to check the punctuality of teachers during the appraisal process.

The study further interrogated aspects of teachers’ conduct using sentiments later transformed to a latent variable using the mean values. Results were summarized as shown in Table 3

Table 3

Descriptive statistics on teachers’ conduct

Sentiments on teacher’s conduct (N = 191)	Mean	Std. Deviation
a) Teacher’s conduct impacts the performance appraisal scores	3.84	1.342
b) Teacher’s conduct impacts pupils’ academic performance	3.68	1.387

c) There are clear disciplining procedures for teachers	3.57	1.386
d) We have a teacher conduct policy	3.45	1.340
e) Decency and modesty in dress code is critical in the teaching profession	3.43	1.340
f) The head-teacher is strict on alcohol or drugs among teachers	3.37	1.378
g) Teacher's conduct impacts the pupil's behavior	3.36	1.388
h) Teachers don't smoke on the school premises	3.31	1.478
i) I am careful of my conduct when inside and outside the school	3.25	1.447
j) I seek permission when late or absent for work	3.20	1.455
k) We have forums in school to address general teacher's conduct	2.83	1.331
l) The head-teacher check teacher's conduct while in class	2.81	1.324

The majority of respondents indicated that teachers' conduct impacts the performance appraisal scores of teachers, the pupils' academic performance and the learners' behaviour. It was also clear that there were disciplining procedures for teachers who fall short of behaviour and conduct. The sub-county Director of TSC said this is anchored in the policy on teachers' behaviour as guided by the TSC. Most teachers also agreed that decency and modesty in the dressing code were critical in the teaching profession.

A study conducted in New Zealand by Komur (2010) advocated for a dressing code among teachers. This is because the mode of dressing reflects one's character and speaks volumes about the conduct of an individual. The head teacher 04 said, "*Learners respect teachers that dress well, and this is positive to teacher's performance*". The sub-county TSC Director also noted that teachers don't

put on the uniform but are expected to dress well and decently.

The head teachers were asked during interview to identify issues that affect teacher's conduct at their schools. Eight broad descriptive themes were inductively generated from their responses. These themes were further categorized into two; that is, the ones that enable a teacher to perform well, and others that affect the teacher's performance negatively. Aspects that affect teachers' performance positively were identified. They include being role models, good time managers—which enables timely coverage of syllabus, and relating well with the administration of a school. It can be noted that in the scenarios where learners envy the examples set by their teachers, their own morale, effort, determination and need for high achievement in the subjects taught by the referenced teacher are enhanced and

heightened. The ultimate outcome obviously replicates on teacher’s performance score.

The null hypothesis (H01) predicted that teachers' conduct does not significantly correlate with the teacher's performance in public primary schools in Igembe North Sub-County. With clear, descriptive results

pointing out the value of the indicators and aspects of teachers' performance and teachers' performance, the study opted to test the underlying relationship between these variables. Data demonstrated normality, and hence the Pearson correlation results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Correlations analysis on teachers ‘performance and teachers ‘conduct

Variables		Y	X1
Y	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	191	
X1	Pearson Correlation	.424**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	191	191

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results in the correlation analysis Table 4 show a Pearson correlation value of .424 and a P-value which is less than 0.05. This indicates a statistically significant positive association between teachers' conduct and performance ($r = .424, p < 0.05$). Hence, the study rejected the null hypothesis and concluded a statistically significant positive relationship between teachers' conduct and the teacher's performance in public primary schools in Igembe North Sub-County, Meru County.

The positive correlation implies that an increase in the explanatory variable (teacher's conduct) causes an increase in the response variable (the teachers' performance). The results have provided a noticeable link between a teacher's conduct and

performance. They imply that teachers whose conduct is rated good have a corresponding good performance appraisal score. Conduct is a central springboard upon which other teaching competence standards flourish. It plays a significant role in shaping teachers' mannerisms, guiding actions, and regulating the nature of involvement with various aspects. Notably, implementing the nine instructional events and the corresponding cognitive processes proposed by Gagne's theory of instruction requires apt character and appropriate conduct of a teacher. The teacher's availability, commitment and individual aspirations in doing instructional activities and embarking on cognitive processes are indispensable and reflects on the teacher's conduct.

The teacher's conduct usually extends outside the classroom and the school environment; hence, one is expected to be admirable. This explains why many countries have included teacher's conduct in the performance matrix of a teacher (Zhang et al., 2016). It implies that the surrounding community usually refers to how teachers conduct themselves outside the immediate school environment. According to Zeeland and Komur (2010), teachers are highly esteemed in society as they are entrusted with their children.

This means that teachers' responsibilities extend outside the school context. Consequently, it is clear that teachers' performance cannot be completely computed without the inclusion of the components of their conduct. A study by Laska (2016) noted how teachers' behaviour characterizes professionalism and punctuality in the school. According to Laska, these two virtues that are rooted and intertwined with conduct account for teachers' performance considerably. Komur (2010) emphasized the need for an appropriate dressing code among teachers saying that the manner and nature of dressing speak volumes about one's conduct. Teachers are expected to dress decently when inside and outside the school environment.

The TPAD manual by the Teachers Service Commission has provided clear performance indicators for assessing the teacher's conduct (TSC, 2019). The finding of this study has empirically linked teachers' conduct to teachers' performance. Therefore, the results complement action by TSC in entrenching teachers' behaviour in the TPAD. However, Kagema and Irungu (2018) noted that

skewness in teachers' appraisal criteria on conduct negated the aspect of motivation to improve behaviour and professional characteristics. According to Munje (2019), teachers' professional behaviour impacts learners' experience and performance in South Africa, hence its significance in assessing an individual teacher.

To mitigate the challenges impeding teachers' performance, the school and TSC should ensure fair promotion of teachers, employing additional teachers to reduce the teachers' workload, providing adequate teaching and learning resources, ensuring conducive learning and teaching environment, orientating new teachers, monitoring the teaching practices, moderating the delocalization action to minimize destabilizing families, instituting continuous teachers professional development, and involving teachers in decision-making process, especially on matters regarding their performance. All these suggestions were classified into three areas; namely, leadership-based solutions, individual-based solutions, and employer-based solutions. TSC Director, Igembe North Sub-County noted that there are clear disciplinary procedures for teachers who fall short of the expected behaviour and conduct. There is also a clear policy on teachers addicted to alcoholism and drug and substance abuse, which recommend that the affected teacher be either interdicted or placed in rehabilitation centres.

4.0 Conclusion

The teacher's conduct is a statistically significant predictor of teachers' performance

in public primary school, hence the need for supportive programs by TSC. The teacher's conduct is a central springboard for other teaching competence standards to flourish. It plays a big role in shaping mannerisms, guiding actions, and regulating the nature of involvement with various aspects in the teaching profession. The teacher's conduct and demeanour are mostly tainted by inappropriate language in the classroom, absenteeism, alcoholism, lateness, poor management of own salary and indecent dressing. When the teacher's misconduct persists, it affects not only one's performance, but also learners' attitude, asserts pressure on an individual's ability to balance issues, and causes strained relationship between the affected teacher and the school management.

The teachers in public primary schools require the establishment of supportive programs by TSC to help in addressing issues that derail their conduct. The programs include guidance and counselling, and

regular training and mentorship for teachers. Other conduct-related measures are ensuring a conducive working environment, establishing rewards for the hardworking teachers, ensuring timely promotion, and heightening the image of teaching professionals at schools and in the industry.

5.0 Recommendations

Teachers' conduct touches on matters of character, demeanour and behaviour in guiding actions and regulating the nature of involvement of other aspects of the teaching competence standards in determining a teacher's overall performance. This implicates the individual action on the head teacher's behaviour modification and leadership skills. This is because the head teacher is the figurehead and the readily available authority in the school. This points out the need for leadership development programs for head teachers to equip them with requisite skills for nurturing, counselling and mentorship in the teachers' conduct.

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